



## Human Rights Commission Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday, August 17, 2022

**Time:** 8:00 PM

**Location:** Conducted by Remote Participation

**\*Notice to the Public on meeting privacy\*** To prevent abuse of video conferencing technology (i.e., Zoom Bombing), all participants, including members of the public, wishing to engage via the Zoom App must register for each meeting and will notice multi-step authentication protocols. Please allow additional time to join the meeting. Further, members of the public who wish to participate without providing their name may still do so by registering to receive the meeting info and using the telephone dial-in information provided.

Please read Governor Baker's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provision of Open Meeting Law for more information regarding virtual public hearings and meetings:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-meeting-law-order-march-12-2020/download>

**Attendees:** Co-Chair Soneja, Commissioners, Bauer, Brown, Grossman, Carey, Jolin, Pusey, Horowitz, Rogers

**Absent:** Commissioner Beauchemin, Co-chair Carney

**DEI Office:** Jillian Harvey

**APD:** Chief Flaherty

**Community Members:** Katell Guellec, Susan Doctrow, Nate Goldschlag, Susan Mortimer, Miriam Stein, Jordan Weinstein, Kristin Anderson, Elizabeth Dray, Francine Lorimer, Carmen Torress, Louise B. Popkin, Lois Fine, Christine Carney, Robin Bergman, Rebecca Gruber, Christina Harrison, Mary Lynn Cramer, Zeba Jamshed, Wyndham Ayares, Melanie Matson, Phedjina Jean, Sarah Mckinnon, Joe Burns

Meeting called to order at 8:00 pm by Co-chair Soneja  
Land acknowledgement by Co-chair Soneja

1. Remote Meeting Notice and Land Acknowledgement
2. Review of July 2022 Meeting Minutes
  - a. Motion to accept with minor edit by Commissioner Pusey, seconded Commissioner Brown
  - b. *Passed with abstentions* from Commissioners Soneja, Grossman

3. Incidents - No new Incidents reported since July 2022 AHRC meeting
  - a. No updates on previous incidents from Commissioners
  - b. No updates on previous incidents by Chief of Police
4. Civil Rights lawsuit - D. Johnson. Attach documentation
  - a. Filed by D. Johnson 3 weeks prior to meeting
  - b. Incident reported in media in Feb 2021
    1. APD officers were investigating an incident near the Alewife Brook Parkway
    2. APD detained complainant, he claims to have been treated in discriminatory manner
    3. Independent investigation completed in 2021 and made available to the public
  - c. APD and Town Manager have release statements regarding the lawsuit
  - d. Chief Flaherty: recap of incident
    - i. Became aware of federal lawsuit via reporter; town has not been served
    - ii. Provided background to AHRC Co-Chairs as follows:
      1. Feb 2021 – incident was not reported immediately, learned about it via FB post
      2. D. Johnson had posted about the incident
      3. She reached out to him and were able to meet with him and his attorney
      4. Independent investigator hired – reviewed 20+ interviews, several videos, completed after 30 days
      5. 3 Officers involved
      6. 1 officer accused of excessive force and put on leave during investigation and has since resigned from the Arlington Police Force
      7. No evidence of racial profiling or discrimination found however policy findings
      8. Department retrained and officer disciplined
    - iii. Commissioner Carey – objection to discussion with APD representative without legal representative from complainant for this incident
      1. Overall AHRC should be hearing from both parties in any given incident
      2. Statement in Boston Globe article was biased to one side of the story
    - iv. Commissioner Jolin – clarifications about incident asked, request for statement from AHRC to the Boston Globe, and an understanding of what the AHRC role is going forward
    - v. Commissioner Pusey – Co-chairs in 2021 met with APD and assigned a commissioner to reach out to the complainant to file a formal complaint – complainant did not want to file a formal report through the AHRC
    - vi. Commissioner Bauer – recommends asking town attorney to attend the AHRC meeting in these situations
    - vii. Commissioner Brown – originally reached out to the complainant with information about AHRC support
    - viii. Commissioner Rogers – would like to entertain a motion to allow community input
      1. Motion to move community input and interaction the APD agenda items next by Commissioner Rogers and seconded by Commissioner Pusey
      2. *Passed by unanimous vote*

5. Discussion about Commission interaction with APD. Role of AHRC – Commissioner Carey

- a. Commissioner Carey – the AHRC should not have made a public statement about this incident because the allegations are serious, and we don't have details from his legal counsel about the allegations of racial profiling
- b. Co-Chair Soneja – the statement was made as this incident has been discussed at length during the time of the incident
- c. Commissioner Pusey – police presence has been discussed in the past – the attendance assists in the understanding of all complaints requiring/requesting AHRC attention. Private issue can be discussed via several other channels to allow for anonymity. Since this incident occurred the civilian review board (CRB) was set up to address complaints against the APD
- d. Co-Chair Soneja – AHRC has outlined a mechanism to propose a complaint against the APD without their presence at the meeting
- e. Commissioner Brown – Agrees with commissioner Carey that this issue should be discussed further within the commission. The CRB was not in place to handle this incident in real time given its late inception. What is the overlap between the CRB and the AHRC? How do we interact with them?
- f. Commissioner Rogers – there is an urgency in Commissioner Carey's statement; as a policy writer/creator, agrees to revisit the policy on press statements, APD presence, and AHRC role
- g. Commissioner Grossman – the AHRC should be looking at the policy about APD presence every 6 months, policy on public statements should be evaluated as well

6. Community Input

- a. Nate Goldshlag: Why did the Chief appoint a retired police officer as an independent reviewer? The complaint was shocking and the independent report was redacted to the point of being unreadable. Would like the AHRC to recommend payment the town to complainant
  - i. Chief Flaherty: this person was recommended, and she was not familiar with this person on a personal level; it is difficult to find a person who is aware of the policies and procedures within the commonwealth
- b. Jordan Weinstein: Agrees with Nate Goldshlag and Commissioner Carey. Feels the AHRC should not be taking sides, there should be neutrality in these situations. There should be a reevaluation of what the AHRC can and cannot do with regards to policies. There is an imbalance at the AHRC meeting by having an APD representative present.
- c. Elizabeth Dray: concerned with transparency about this situation. Does not feel the independent reviewer was independent due to relationship to Arlington. There is a lack of trust between the community and the AHRC due to presence of APD at meetings, although there must be a relationship there seems to be a conflict
- d. Susan Mortimer: it is difficult to understand that the Chief of Police did not hear about this incident by an officer but rather via FB. There has been little change within the AHRC, the commission has been closely aligned to the town and APD. The commissions relationship with the ADL is concerning. Town/police should pay remunerations to complainant.
- e. Christina Harrison: comment in chat: I really appreciate the work of Chief Flaherty, consistently doing more than others in her position may have done in the past in the face of really hard situations where things need to improve. I am also really grateful for the work done in the commission in trying to make our community safer and more fair. I think it is helpful for the police department and

- the human rights commission to have healthy communications
  - f. Phedjina Jean: disappointed with this incident. Has not had incidents with APD but consciously also avoids situations with the police. Racial profiling, and implicit bias training should happen at least twice a year
7. DEI Update (Jillian Harvey)
- a. Focus groups will start in Sept.
  - b. ADA coordinator has been hired – start in Sept
  - c. Employee training to start in Sept (racial equity)
8. Working Groups Update
- a. Schools & Education
    - i. Did not meet during the summer
    - ii. Will meet with School DEI Coordinator
  - b. Outreach/Events
    - i. Brochures have been completed
    - ii. Trifold about the AHRC has been updated and has gone to print
    - iii. New banners to be created for BHM
  - c. Communications
    - i. Domain transfer meeting scheduled for next week to coordinate efforts
    - ii. Memorial for first commissioner and an explainer about recent legislation posted to AHRC website
    - iii. Next step = Intake form to be added to the website to link to the AHRC trifold
  - d. Housing
    - i. No meeting
    - ii. Next steps = Will reach out to groups for training
9. Co-Chairs Report
- a. Co-chair meeting: discussion of lawsuit
10. FY23 Budget Discussion
- a. Fiscal year 2022 spend:
    - i. \$1140 (g-suite); \$1827 (printing); \$250 (speakers); \$2800 (banners); \$1000 (youth artists); \$1000 (adult artist)
11. “Mapping Project” and Anti-Defamation League-Commissioner Grossman
- a. Commissioner Grossman
    - i. ~42% increase in antisemitic activities between 2020 and 2021
    - ii. The mapping project possibly sponsored by the Boston BDS group - includes schools, non-profits, etc. – has called for the dismantling of Boston Jewish communities through the identification of individuals’ names and addresses
    - iii. National BDS group has asked this to be taken down as well due to the violent rhetoric
  - b. Commissioner Carey
    - i. Concrete actions would help to guide AHRC
  - c. Commissioner Soneja
    - i. Could the AHRC write an informative piece to educate the community?
12. AHRC statement on recent SCOTUS decisions
- a. Statement will be reviewed by full commission prior to posting
  - b. Commissioner Pusey – request for commissioners to help with editing the

statement – up to 4 total

13. Town day, Sep 17 preparations - Commissioners Jolin and Pusey
  - a. Stickers, bracelets, and painted rocks will be completed by end of Aug
  - b. Survey to include 5 general questions
  - c. Commissioner Pusey and Jolin to coordinate with Co-chair Carney for town day set-up
14. Announcements
  - a. Next meetings – September 21, 2022, October 19, 2022
  - b. Retreat planning
    - i. To be discussed next month
  - c. Incident Handling
    - i. August-Commissioner Minton
    - ii. Sept- Commissioner Grossman
    - iii. October - Commissioner Bauer
  - d. Farmers' Market Wednesday, October 5
15. Adjournment
  - a. Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Carey
  - b. *Passed with unanimous vote*

**Next meeting: Wednesday, September 20, 2022, 8:00 pm, Remote Participation**

Anyone needing accessibility information, or other assistance to attend this meeting should contact [dei@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:dei@town.arlington.ma.us). This meeting is open to all interested individuals.